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ABSTRACT

The report delineates the distinctions between career education and vocational education and recommends changes in Federal policy to spur advances in making education more relevant to student needs. Reviewing the career education movement over the last three years, the paper discusses some of the problems encountered as educators try to meet the increased national demand for more opportunities in career and vocational education, especially at the secondary level and beyond. Increased costs are seen as the principal barrier against more rapid conversion of education to a career orientation, and it is hoped that Federal subsidies will fill this growing need. The Vocational Education Act of 1968, to be reconsidered by Congress in 1975, and the Education Amendments of 1974 would be steps in the right direction. Eight recommendations for developing a national policy on career education are presented by the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. It is hoped that, if responded to, these recommendations dealing with funding policies and legislative needs will be the spur to action in making American education more responsive to human needs. (MW)

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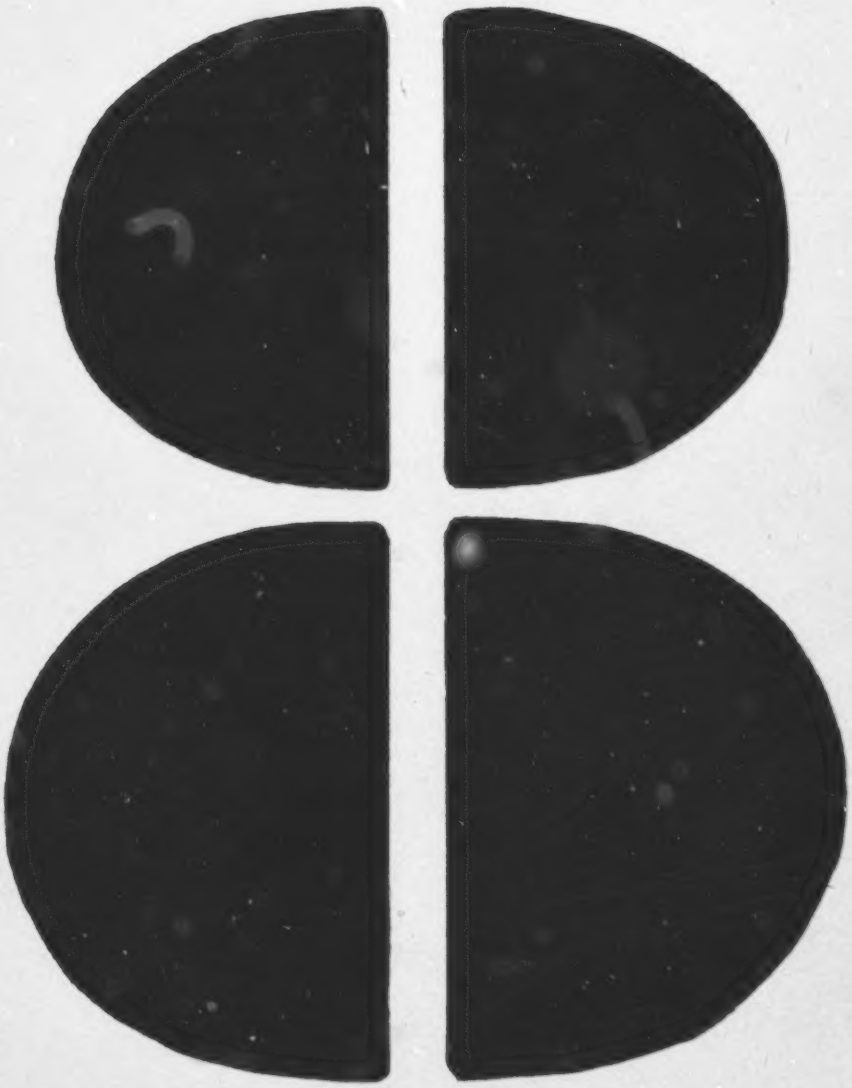
A NATIONAL POLICY ON CAREER EDUCATION

8th report

THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

September 1974



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The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education was created by the Congress through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968. Its members, drawn from business, labor, education and the general public are appointed by the President. The Council is charged by law to advise the Commissioner of Education concerning the operation of vocational education programs, make recommendations concerning such programs, and make annual reports to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare for transmittal to Congress.

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JAMES A. RHODES
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CALVIN DELLEFIELD
Executive Director

September 2, 1974

The Honorable Caspar Weinberger
Secretary
Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

There has been a great deal of confusion concerning the meaning of career education and the role of vocational education within the career education concept. The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has refrained from issuing a statement, awaiting the evolution of the career education concept as the states and local school districts begin to implement programs in its name.

The time has now arrived, we believe, for the Council to attempt to clarify the issues. We are pleased to submit this report, which both delineates the distinctions between career education and vocational education and recommends changes in Federal policy to spur further advances in making our schools relevant to the real needs of students.

Sincerely,

James A. Rhodes

James A. Rhodes

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A NATIONAL POLICY ON CAREER EDUCATION

The Eighth Report of

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A NATIONAL POLICY ON CAREER EDUCATION

Three years ago, the Commissioner of Education made a courageous appeal for a new sense of purpose in American education. He proposed that we reorder our whole education effort around the new concept which he chose to call "career education."

His call triggered a quiet revolution in American education. The Commissioner said:

> "Education's most serious failing is its self-induced voluntary fragmentation. The strong tendency of education's several parts to separate from one another, to divide the enterprise against itself....
>
> "I propose that the universal goal of American education, starting now, be this: that every young person completing our school program at grade twelve be ready to enter higher education or to enter useful or rewarding employment...."

This appeal has been widely misconstrued by educational policy makers, and thus its far-reaching nature has been misunderstood. "Career education" is NOT simply a new name for what we now call "vocational education." The Commissioner was not saying that our concept of vocational education should be somewhat enlarged and the enlarged concept called "career education." Nor was he saying that new programs in something called "career education" should be developed at the cost of vocational education.

He was saying something much different and much more fundamental. He was saying that the old distinctions which have crippled our educational effort should be forever laid aside and a new unity of purpose be expressed by a new universal term: "career education."

Right now we have a bewildering variety of designations within the educational system, but the principal ones are these:

College preparatory education

Vocational education

General education

These terms have come to suggest choices which need not be made, distinctions which have no meaning, divisions of what is really indivisible, and conflicts where none need exist.

Our thought and our practice about education should at last be integrated. The result of this integration should be called "career education." It would come about when American education emphasizes preparation for work as a prominent and permanent objective of the public schools. We are not appealing for "separate but equal" attention to vocational education in the overall system. We are insisting, rather, that career education is a UNIVERSAL necessity, and requires the integration of ALL our educational resources. Moreover, the concept has been extended to include unpaid work as well as the world of paid employment. The concept has swept the country. There is hardly a state in the nation that is not experimenting with some form of career education. The Commissioner simply verbalized a nearly universal conviction: that American education has drifted away from any sensible intention, and needs--desparately--to be brought back on course. He provided a vital point of focus, and gave a thwarted movement a sense of direction and legitimacy. The consequences--by any measure--have been enormous. But not nearly enough.

There is still a deepening public discontent. Antagonism to the educational establishment is becoming epidemic.

Late last year, the Harris Organization released some updated measures of the people's confidence in the leadership of American institutions. The

results were hair-raising. As recently as 1966, sixty-one percent of the people expressed "a great deal of confidence" in education's leadership. Since then, that figure has fallen to an alarming thirty-three percent, and it is still falling.

The reasons for this headlong erosion of confidence seem clear enough on the surface. People want something from the educational establishment that it is not now delivering. The message is unmistakable. If education is to regain the confidence of the people, it must produce results that make sense to people.

We believe that the public wants two things: one very consciously, the other more subconsciously. The public's conscious demand is a demand that education be made relevant to the world of work. What vocational educators have known for years--that America is miseducating a good number of its young people--has, at last, become an article of the conventional wisdom. But the public's sub-conscious demand is another matter altogether. It is a demand that education be made more relevant to the achievement of the good life.

Today, most people are aspiring to examine and experience a range of life's possibilities that has been an option to no more than a tiny handful. We have educated large numbers of people in the liberal arts, but the practical arts and the fine arts have been reserved for a few. That must now change. The education of isolated, specialized elites is a thing of the past. A new mass aristocracy is demanding preparation for participation in the larger human experience, and educators must provide it. The need, clearly, is for the prompt integration of our fractured system of education around the concept of career education. And the people know it.

Encouraged only by official rhetoric and some largely symbolic Federal

action, local communities are responding to the obvious need for reform with remarkable imagination and determination. The grass roots activities in this area have overwhelmed educational policymakers at the state and federal levels as no other movement in the history of American education. They are doing it largely with vocational education money, but unfortunately, too often at the cost of vocational education's own needs.

In the last three years close to a third of all school districts in America have initiated career educational efforts. Over thirty-five state departments of education have appointed career education coordinators. At least twenty state boards of education have passed resolutions supporting career education. All this occurred without a federal law called career education.

Clearly, the career education movement has powerful momentum. But it has been, so far, largely a state and local movement. It has the support of a dramatically inclusive cross-section of the country: business and labor, rich and poor, black and white, urban and rural. The opposition is coming, predictably, from a few educational elitists. But their response is largely hysterical, and based on an irrational fear that the demand is to fire the philosophers and expand the machine shops. Other critics refuse to recognize that the diversity of definitions about career education is, in fact, a positive force that encourages a variety of responses, reflecting more accurately local needs.

Still other barriers need to be overcome. Most activities in career education to date have taken place at the elementary school. Little has happened at the high school or community college or university level. Career education, as so many other parts of American education, has overpromised and under-delivered. Special groups such as the economically disadvantaged, minorities, the mentally and physically handicapped and

the gifted and talented, have not benefited. Nor has career education dealt with the serious problem of occupational sex stereotyping, that restricts freedom of occupational choice. These sobering facts must be faced.

In such circumstances, what is the appropriate federal response? We do not believe the federal government should try to "direct" the mushrooming career education movement. It should try, simply, to reinforce and accelerate what is already happening. The simplest method is probably the best.

The principal barrier to the rapid conversion of education to a career orientation is simply this: it costs a little more than general education. The reasons for this differential are well known. A career program requires more and better counseling, and more "real-world" equipment. The world of work is a capital, intensive world, and, to some extent, career programs must simulate these expensive atmospheres. Career education requires specialized staff to involve community resources and to create new service units for job placement and follow-up of all school leavers. There is need for training programs for teachers and supervisors, for new instructional materials and for the creation of "work experience" stations in industry and the schools.

What better way for the federal government to accelerate career education than to subsidize its differential cost? The present wholesome diversity of response would not be compromised, but an urgent national purpose would be served.

We need, desperately, a kindergarten through university career system serving people of all ages, children and adults in all settings, and surely there is no quicker, practical way to move toward it.

Next year, the Vocational Education Act of 1968 must be reconsidered by Congress. We would hope the Congress considers full funding of this legislation, since there is no question that our nation's concern with

career education has greatly increased the demand for more opportunities in vocational education, particularly at the post-secondary level.

The Education Amendments of 1974, which established an Office of Career Education and separate funding authorization to support the planning, development, and assessment of career education programs, is a good beginning. It should be the basis upon which future legislative initiatives will be based, which will further define the thrust and purpose of career education, and refine the interaction between it and the various other components of the educational spectrum. Future legislation must provide the incentive and support needed to achieve a totally integrated educational system.

Congress, we believe, will be ready for new initiatives in this field. They will hear about it at home--from educators, from their business constituencies, and from puzzled parents. Not since the Morrill Act of 1862 has there been a proposal for educational reform that has such support from both the business and industry community, and from the public schools. We believe there will be very little Congressional opposition to a sensible support program for career education. It offers an unusual opportunity to deliver an optimum program.

The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education proposes the following recommendations for developing a national policy on career education:

1. That the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, in initiating new legislative proposals, maintain a separate funding system for career education. This recommendation was previously made by the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HEW on July 14, 1974.

2. That policymakers and legislators recognize that career education and vocational education are not synonymous. The curriculum development being done in the name of career education, which is

largely concerned with orientation into the work ethic at the elementary and secondary levels for students not in vocational programs, does not meet the needs of vocational education curriculum, which deals with teaching specific occupational skills.

3. That federal funds for career education be used by local school systems to pay only the differential costs of career education as compared with the costs of conducting established educational programs currently offered by the schools.

4. That federal career education funds be utilized by the states and other appropriate jurisdictions at their discretion, in terms of priorities for initiating and establishing career education in their school systems.

5. That the Office of Career Education, reporting directly to the Commissioner of Education, be promptly established for the purpose of coordinating the management of funds, program implementation, research, professional development, and other career education activities of the Office of Education, the National Institute of Education, the National Institutes of Health, and other components of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and for publishing special reports dealing with successful career education developments, practices and innovations.

6. That not less than $15 million be appropriated annually for FY 1975-76 for career education as authorized by the Education Amendments of 1974.

7. That any new legislation dealing with career education be considered separately from the Vocational Education Act in order to keep clear the distinction between vocational education and career education.

8. That in implementing career education, educators and administrators at all levels design and utilize their programs in a comprehensive, integrated manner which will accommodate the life-long educational needs of all our people. Our institutions must be flexible enough to permit career exploration, without foreclosing opportunities for higher education.

In making these minimum recommendations for a new national policy on

career education, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has taken into account the recommendations of the State Advisory Councils on Vocational Education, as well as testimony taken during its five public hearings held during 1973-74 in Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Houston and Los Angeles.

Finally, we recognize that vocational education must bear a heavy burden in the advancement of career education. Vocational education now exists to educate people to appreciate, practice, and extend all of the arts of career education. Without vocational education as an integral part of career education, people can neither participate in culture, nor share in its rewards; nor can they develop any sense of the excitement of the human enterprise.

What we most need now is ACTION. We have provided an unmistakable sense of direction. We now need a united, cohesive effort to make career education, in which all the arts of education are integrated, a universal reality, and we need it now.

Frankly, we are getting tired of the endless talk of change. We are tired of all the studies that simply restate the need for change. We are getting tired of exhortations to change. We must stop talking about change and start changing. We must come to understand the processes which permit us to resist the kind of changes we know are absolutely essential. We must somehow repeal irrelevance in American education. We believe the concept of career education will move us toward that urgent enterprise.

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